

Message Text

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47

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USARJ CAMP ZAMA

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COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA

USAGO MACHINATO

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COMFLEACTS OKINAWA

OAFO CAMP BUTLER

OAC CAMP BUTLER

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NAHA 103

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

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SUBJECT: OKINAWA PREFECTURAL ELECTIONS TO BE HELD JUNE 13

REF: NAHA 082 (DTG 250731Z FEB 76)

SUMMARY: THE GOVERNORSHIP AND PREFECTURAL ASSEMBLY OF OKINAWA, HERETOFORE CONTROLLED BY "REFORMIST" ELEMENTS OPPOSED TO THE PRESENCE OF U.S. MILITARY BASES, WILL BE DETERMINED FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS IN ELECTIONS TO BE HELD ON JUNE 13. REFORMISTS MAY HAVE THE EDGE IN WHAT EVERYONE EXPECTS WILL BE A VERY CLOSELY CONTESTED
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ELECTION. PRESENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE STATE AND FUTURE OF THE

LOCAL ECONOMY WILL BE THE TOP ISSUE, POSSIBLY OVERSHADOWING ALL OTHERS. OUR MILITARY BASES WILL BE A MAJOR SUBJECT OF POLITICAL DEBATE AND NEWS MEDIA ATTENTION BUT ITS RELEVANCE TO THE OUTCOME WILL DEPEND IN GOOD PART ON THE NUMBER AND TYPE OF SPECIFIC "PROBLEMS" AND "INCIDENTS" RELATING TO OUR BASES WHICH ARE ON THE SCENE BETWEEN NOW AND ELECTION DAY. END SUMMARY

1. OKINAWA PREFECTURAL ELECTION BOARD ANNOUNCED ON MARCH 10 THAT GUBERNATORIAL AND PREFECTURAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD ON JUNE 13. OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF ELECTION DAY WILL BE MADE ON MAY 19 FOR THE GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS AND ON JUNE 1 FOR THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, ON WHICH DATES ELECTION CAMPAIGNS MAY LEGALLY BEGIN UNDER JAPANESE ELECTION LAWS.

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2. FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES, HOWEVER, ELECTION CAMPAIGNS ARE ALREADY GETTING UNDER WAY. PROCESS OF SELECTING CANDIDATES AND OF PUTTING TOGETHER CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATIONS IS LARGELY COMPLETED AND CANDIDATES ARE BEGINNING TO TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO DISCUSSION OF ISSUES.

3. GOVERNOR YARA, WHO HAS HELD OFFICE SINCE LATE 1968, WILL BE SUCCEEDED BY EITHER KOICHI TAIRA, OF THE OKINAWA SOCIALIST MASSES PARTY (OSMP), OR TSUMICHIYO ASATO, CURRENTLY A DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST PARTY (DSP) MEMBER OF THE DIET WHO FOR MANY YEARS HAD BEEN A SENIOR LEADER OF OSMP ALONG WITH TAIRA. TAIRA WILL BE SUPPORTED BY REFORMIST PARTIES AND ORGANIZATIONS WHICH SUPPORTED YARA INCLUDING THE COMMUNISTS, KOMEITO, SOCIALISTS, OSMP AND KENROKYO LABOR FEDERATION. ASATO HAS BEEN ENDORSED BY CONSERVATIVE LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, DSP AND DOMEI LABOR FEDERATION.

4. LOCAL POLITICAL CIRCLES AND OBSERVERS ALL PREDICT HOTLY CONTESTED ELECTIONS AND HESITATE TO PREDICT OUTCOME. ENDEMIC LDP LOCAL FACTIONALISM AND LDP INABILITY TO MOUNT A UNIFIED CAMPAIGN PLUS EXPECTED CHARGES OF "TURNCOAT" AND "BETRAYAL" OF HIS LONGTIME COLLEAGUE TAIRA ARE EXPECTED TO HANDICAP ASATO. FOR HIS PART, HOWEVER, ASATO ON MARCH 4 TOLD CONGEN HE SAW GOOD CHANCE OF DEFEATING TAIRA IN VIEW OF REDUCTION IN STRENGTH OF REFORMIST FORCES

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SINCE LAST ELECTIONS IN JUNE 1972. OKINAWA TEACHERS WHO WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN ORGANIZING YARA'S ELECTION ARE NOW PREOCCUPIED WITH EDUCATIONAL ISSUES. KENROKYO LABOR FEDERATION IS WEAKER IN NUMBERS. YARA ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN TARRERED BY SCANDAL AND MANY VOTERS ARE GENERALLY DISILLUSIONED WITH REFORMIST RULE. FINALLY, ASATO EXPECTS TO HAVE EDGE WITH ELECTORATE IN DEBATE OVER WHAT HE AND OTHER POLITICAL OBSERVERS ALL PREDICT WILL BE THE PRIME ELECTION ISSUE; NAMELY, WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE PRESENT DEPRESSED STATE OF THE

OKINAWAN ECONOMY AND HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT AFTER EXPO AND OKINAWA'S FUTURE ECONOMIC GROWTH.

5. REFORMIST FORCES INCLUDING THE COMMUNISTS, OSP, OKINAWAN TEACHERS ASSOCIATION AND GENSUIKYO IN PARTICULAR AND QUITE POSSIBLY THE NEWS MEDIA (REFTEL) CAN BE EXPECTED TO TRY AND MAKE A MAJOR ISSUE OF THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF U.S. MILITARY BASES AND OF ANY "PROBLEMS" OR "INCIDENTS" RELATING TO OUR MILITARY BASES WHICH HAPPEN TO BE ON THE SCENE BETWEEN NOW AND ELECTION DAY, PARTICULARLY IN MAY AND EARLY JUNE WHEN CAMPAIGNING WILL BE AT A PEAK.

6. IN MARCH 4 DISCUSSION WITH CONGEN, ASATO SAID THAT, AS MEMBER OF NATIONAL DSP AND SUPPORTED BY LDP, HE ENDORSED BOTH PARTIES' NATIONAL POLICY OF SUPPORTING SECURITY TREATY WITH U.S. AND PRESENCE OF U.S.

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MILITARY BASES IN JAPAN. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE PERSONALLY SHARED GENERAL OKINAWAN BELIEF THAT OKINAWA IS BEING OBLIGED BY GOJ TO BEAR UNREASONABLE SHARE OF NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEFENSE OF JAPAN, CITING PERCENTAGE OF U.S. FORCES STATIONED ON OKINAWA AND PERCENTAGE OF MILITARY-USED LAND ON OKINAWA AS OPPOSED TO REST OF JAPAN. ASATO IMPLIED, HOWEVER, THAT HE DID NOT INTEND TO TAKE ANY INITIATIVES TO MAKE OUR MILITARY BASES AN ISSUE IN THE CAMPAIGN. ON THE CONTRARY, HE EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT HE COULD LIMIT REFORMISTS' EFFORTS TO PLAY UP THE BASE ISSUE BY CHARGING THEM WITH NEGLECTING THE ISSUE OF OVERRIDING CONCERN TO ALL OKINAWANS, THE STATE AND FUTURE OF THE ECONOMY.

KNOWLES

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